

157

EULOGY

ON

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST

OF

THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR

OF

The City of Philadelphia,

IN THE

SECOND AFRICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON THE

Sixth Day of December, 1833.

BY WILLIAM WHIPPER.

PHILADELPHIA:

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Tribute to Wilberforce in Philadelphia.

At an adjourned meeting of the coloured citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia, held on Tuesday evening the 1st inst. to make a demonstration of our regard and gratitude to the memory of that venerable and distinguished philanthropist **WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.**—in consequence of the indisposition of the chairman, (Mr. Forten,) the meeting was organized by choosing **James M'Crummel**, President, **Thomas Butler** and **Frederick A. Hinton**, Vice Presidents, and **John B. Dupee** and **Jacob White** Secretaries.

The President opened the meeting in a few pertinent remarks, and the following preamble and resolutions were presented, with a few observations by **Mr. F. A. Hinton**; and after some highly appropriate remarks from **Mr. Robert Purvis**, and several other gentlemen, were unanimously adopted :—

Whereas, it has pleased infinite Goodness to remove from mutability this our sincere friend and benefactor—it therefore becomes us, who were a portion of the objects of his solicitude, to pay that tribute of respect and gratitude which his noble exertions in our behalf would inculcate.

Resolved, In testimony of the foregoing that our 'whole people,' more particularly that portion we represent, be recommended to set apart a day for the special purpose, not only of commemorating the disinterested labours of that great and good man, **William Wilberforce, Esq.** but the noble and dignified course which he so eminently and availingly advocated,—viz: the glorious cause of Freedom.

Resolved, That a committee of seven persons be appointed to make such arrangements as may be deemed expedient to carry into operation the foregoing resolution—embracing mainly the delivery of an appropriate eulogium.

The following gentlemen were appointed: Messrs. **Jacob C. White**, **Joseph Cassey**, **F. A. Hinton**, **Robert Purvis**, **James M'Crummel**, **Abraham Williams** and **Samuel D. Potts**.

On motion, *Resolved*, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in all the papers friendly to the great cause of humanity.

JAMES M'CRUMMELL, President.

THOMAS BUTLER, {
FRED. A. HINTON, { V. Presidents.

Jno. B. Dupee, {
Jacob White, { Secretaries.

MR. WILLIAM WHIPPER.

DEAR SIR—By the unanimous voice of the committee of seven, appointed to carry into effect the measures adopted at an adjourned meeting of the coloured citizens of Philadelphia county, held on the 1st inst. to commemorate the life and character of the late **WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.**, you were selected, and

we, a sub-committee, authorized to solicit your services in the delivery of an appropriate eulogy, in commemoration of that illustrious philanthropist.

We have the honour, dear sir, to be your obedient servants,

ROBERT PURVIS,
F. A. HINTON,
JACOB C. WHITE,

Oct. 3rd, 1833.

Messrs. ROBERT PURVIS, JACOB C. WHITE, F. A. HINTON.

GENTLEMEN—I respectfully acknowledge the receipt of your polite invitation of the 3d ultimo in behalf of the committee you represent, "authorized to solicit my services in the delivery of an appropriate address, on the character of the late WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq." Having concluded to accept the same, I have, therefore, in behalf of yourselves and the committee you represent, the honour to be your most obedient and very humble servant,

WILLIAM WHIPPER,

Philada., Nov. 11, 1833.

EULOGY.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS—To duly awaken and justly impress upon the feelings of an audience, the inestimable worth of an individual whose purity of life and uprightness of character has imperishably enrolled his name in the archives of nations, as one of the greatest earthly benefactors, is a duty of such magnitude, that those who can call to their aid the most powerful of human requisites might well in their appeal, ask for indulgence. In contemplating the history of mankind in all ages, we are naturally led to the brow of a scenery that presents so many varied hues, so intermixed and interwoven with vice and virtue that, while there is much to admire there is more to lament that the philosopher who could only love causes for their effects, while he admired the hand that adorned the picture, might frequently regret that materials could have been found to produce the colouring.

The most pleasing history that can command our attention is that which depicts the ancient splendour of Africa, when the sunbeams of science and civilization were illuminating that vast continent, and imparting their benign influence to the then dark and barbarous regions of the world. The most horrible, that which exhibits her downfall, carrying with it such heart-rending consequences that human nature sickens at the recital, and a Christian world might well exhibit her lamentations in mourning and regret that she could point either to the history of nations, or to that quarter of the globe that would prove that *she* had once existed.

But the rise and fall of other nations has taught us that invaluable example that an overruling Providence, in his wise

dispensation of affairs, has suffered governments as well as individuals to perform their different revolutions. So that when she who was the first to rise and demonstrate the value of a regular cultivation of the arts, sciences, and civilization, was the first to fall into degradation, barbarism, and superstition, it was then only left her for to pourtray the folly of national arrogance, and exhibit the destructibility of governmental pride. But, my fellow citizens, we have not met to commiserate the unfortunate condition of mankind, or to lament the fate of governments. We have met to pay a tribute of respect to one of the best men that ever graced the earth, or ornamented history. With talents of the highest order, and whose labours have been the most indefatigable in defence of human rights for upwards of forty years, both in and out of Parliament, twenty years of which were spent in appealing to and persuading Parliament to pass a law that would change the slave trade from a national commerce to a national piracy. To achieve this, he doubtless encountered more difficulties, disappointments and persecutions than perhaps has fallen to the lot of any individual of his day, in the prosecution of the most righteous enterprise.

The eloquent and forcible appeals that he then made in behalf of poor unfortunate Africa, and her much injured sons (although the voice that spoke them into existence, like the spirit that moved it, has quit this terrestrial ball,) have not yet ceased to re-echo over the land, but fall on the ear wherever forcibly uttered, with the same convincing power. His speeches, though prepared for and directed towards the members of Parliament, were destined to meet the views of a more numerous and more enlightened assemblage—I mean posterity. His acts are now before the world to receive the meed of praise to which they are so richly entitled.

Doubtless no man ever lived who urged the passage of a law with a more honest zeal, or with such a torrent of awakening eloquence as that which he used in beseeching Parliament to quit her merciless invasions on poor, defenceless Africa. In one of his speeches, said to be the most powerful ever delivered in St. Stephens, he uses the following

language: "Would you be acquainted with the character of the slave trade, look to the continent of Africa, and there you will behold such a scene of horrors, as no tongue can express, no imagination represent to itself. One mode adopted by the petty chieftains of that country is, that of committing depredations upon each others' territories. This circumstance gives a peculiar character to the wars in Africa. But this is not all. No means of procuring slaves is left untouched. Even the *administration of justice* itself is made a fertile source of supply to this inhuman traffic. O, sir, these things are too bad to be longer endured; I cannot persuade myself that a British House of Commons will give its sanction to the continuance of this inhuman traffic. Never was there indeed a system so big with cruelty. To whatever part of it you direct your view the eye finds no relief. Hurricanes clear the air, and persecution promotes the propagation of truth. But here it is otherwise. It is the prerogative of this detested traffic to rob war of its generosity, and peace of its security. You have the vices of polished society without its knowledge or its comforts, and the evils of barbarism without its simplicity. No age, sex, or rank is exempt from the influence of this wide wasting calamity. It attains to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed wickedness; and scorning all competition or comparison, it stands in the undisputed possession of its own detestable pre-eminence."

The same honest zeal that characterized his youthful labours in defence of the mother country and her native sons, has accompanied him through a long and useful life, in assisting to remove from the British dominions the corroding stain of domestic slavery, and preparing the way for their ultimate enjoyment of civil and religious liberty in the land of *their birth*. So if man in the most laudable pursuit for the benefit of his fellow man can do aught that demands respect, we are justly bound to reverence his memory. *He is now no more*. If the grave holds the mortal remains of a man the fruit of whose toil is a treasure, and whom the dictates of duty bid us worship, that man was WILLIAM WILBERFORCE. A name that should descend to posterity clothed with more of the

ever-green laurels that ornament human greatness, than all the heroes of Grecian and Roman fables.

To celebrate his acts and to reverence his memory is to render homage to the cause of religion, morality and public as well as private virtue. To extend his fame is to enrich and embellish the cause he advocated. We, who enjoy the benefits, owe to posterity a history of the *man* who stood foremost in achieving them. As bodies and matter fly forward in proportion to the projectile force received, so in proportion to our exertions will the beneficial results of that *freedom* he laboured to establish, be felt, circulated, and enjoyed. It is therefore lamentable to me, and it should be to you, and the glorious cause he so eminently adorned, that he who stands as your representative on the present occasion, is inadequate to the task of fully developing those refulgent virtues that would delineate his character in all those glowing colours that ornament the great actions of his life.

Through all the different vicissitudes of his life he was the same inflexible original, always ready to brave the utmost inconvenience, to aid the oppressed and promote the cause of liberty. If the wandering stoic, in search of matter to establish his theory, should doubt that the passage of a law to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain was a work of such difficulty as to bring into requisition such eminent talents, ardent zeal and untiring industry, let him inquire at the halls of legislation—let him examine the parliamentary journals of the house of commons, from its first introduction by Mr. Pitt, on the 9th of May, 1788, until its final passage, when introduced by Mr. Fox, on the 10th of June, 1806; he may then divine that peace is the end of all things; but that to attain it, the black and tempestuous clouds of war, with her red lightnings may flash, her thunders roll, her seas rage and foam with an angry fury, until the hurricanes of impetuous wrath may direct us to the foreboding of an awful destruction—if he shall then suppose that the system of morality was then based on such proud principles as not only to advocate the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, but promote the cause of public as well as private virtue—let the reign of

Elizabeth, James and Charles answer; let the desolating wars that dethroned kings and princes of the eighteenth century answer; let the history of the church, and the horrors of the inquisition speak aloud; let poor, unfortunate Africa, whose tribes, towns and cities became a theatre of blood and carnage to feed the hand of the ruthless destroyer of the best prospects of civilized man, utter forth her lamentations; let the ships freighted with human victims, stuffed and crammed in the middle passage, wafted forward by the winds of heaven, whose captives received scarcely any other ventilation than that produced by the messenger of death, preparing food for the monsters of the deep, reappear in all their real and imaginative forms; let the monsters of the deep, that daily and nightly followed these vessels of crime from one shore to the other, offer up their dead, and let their departed spectres, on whatever sea may have borne these vessels of crime and pollution, or on whatever land slavery may have existed, stand forth and testify to the guilt of these transgressors of the rights of man and the laws of heaven; let the slave markets, of whatever country or nation, bow with humility at the merited indignation heaped on them so liberally by a virtuous posterity; let public opinion, during this scene of outrage and cruelty, be taken as a criterion to form our judgment of public morals, and we might justly be inclined to believe that the progressive extension of the human species ought to have been earnestly deprecated by the wise and good—that nature should have stood still in her socket, the planets cease to revolve on their axis, and all creation become inanimate at the “obduracy of civilized man,” and that no more human beings, should have been born, either *heirs* to tyrannical power, or doomed to suffer oppression.

It was in times like these, when corruption and cruelty spread forth its withering influence over land and sea, and ushered forth their noxious exhalations, (like the upas of Java,) blasting the fairest fruits of creation, and poisoning with their pestiferous odour the noblest productions of the animal kingdom, that the light of heaven with its virtuous fragrance first beamed forth its delectable smiles on young *Wilberforce*.

We do not, however, find that any extraordinary circumstances attended the birth of this great man that might induce his relatives, or the most sanguine of his friends, to believe that he was a child of great promise. Although he descended from an opulent and ancient parentage, and his ancestors can be traced to the profession of distinguished situations in public life, yet neither his birth nor education seemed calculated to render him the occupant of that distinguished situation he afterwards held in the literary and political world. But his was not a mind that loitered around scholastic refinements. The bent of his genius was of a nobler cast. He possessed an insatiable thirst for useful knowledge, that new acquisitions strengthened and enlarged, until by his philanthropic and Christian benevolence, he was capable of forwarding the many noble enterprizes that redounded to the happiness of his country, and entailed on mankind the greatest blessings.

Among his many great achievements, the "abolition of the slave" may be justly marked down as the greatest effort of his life, and in that history that records his deeds of glory, it will illumine the brightest page, and on that monument that may be built to his honour, or erected to his memory, it will be placed the topmost stone, and stand as a crown.

In his successful advocacy and prosecution of that noble enterprize, we must ascribe to him all that human exertions could command or conceive. The highest intellectual endowments, the most unflinching fortitude, the most ardent zeal, and untiring industry—a mind the most skillful in penetration, framed to conceive, with a heart to approve, and a will to act; the most happy method of associating his ideas, and gifted by nature with an impassioned eloquence, that never exerts itself but to command, convince and subdue. He at once with a majestic air, undaunted by dangers, threw the torch of light, justice and truth, into the strong holds of slavery, sophism and deceit, and, as it were, with the "grasp of a strong arm" he pulled down the most impregnable of its fences.

His successes, great as they were, cannot be *wholly* attri-

buted to his own exertions. He was assisted by an alliance of kindred spirits, who faithfully struggled in the same great cause. The philanthropist* to whom posterity will no doubt assign the place next to *Wilberforce*, or probably regard him as his equal, may justly be regarded as the greatest living philanthropist on the globe. If we form our judgment either from the extent of his exertions, his numberless privations, the multiplicity of his writings, the depth of his researches, or the length of his labours, we may challenge the world to produce, either from the living record or all history, his superior.

While Wilberforce was wielding the torch in the house of commons, scorching the abominations of that sinful policy, he coolly and deliberately fed the "vestal fire" that kept alive the flame. The one gathered the materials, the other disposed of them. While the one was painting the horrors of that detestable traffic with a blaze of eloquence that ought to "move the rude and inanimate parts of nature with horror and indignation at the recital of so enormous an action," the other was awakening the attention of the nation to its duty by the eloquence of his pen. In their respective situations they occupied, it not only required the highest effort of human genius, but their united action, to elevate at so early a period the fabric of human wisdom so high that the nation might walk in the path of justice and humanity.

In associating the name of Clarkson with the subject of our eulogy, it is not our intention to seek among the living those virtuous ornaments intended to adorn the character of the illustrious dead, nor to pass by the exertions of many other distinguished men, who aided in the accomplishment of the same glorious purpose. But on account of the relative position they stood to each other, during that remarkable contest, that it is impossible to associate the virtues of the one, without estimating the valuable influence those virtues received from the other. On that great subject their souls were Siametrically knit, and it would be as pardonable a dereliction of duty to neglect the kindred of body as mind.

*The venerable Thomas Clarkson.

Having now established the relationship that existed between them, we shall again pass onward to notice those sublime traits of character that enrich and encircle the name of Mr. *Wilberforce*, and leave that of *Clarkson*, which must soon, according to the calendar of nature, be enrolled among the virtuous dead, for nations to mourn his loss, and nations to sound his praise.

Perhaps, like the elder Adams and Jefferson, (whose qualifications bear a strong similarity to Wilberforce and Clarkson,) some distinguished statesman* alike renowned for his patriotism and public virtues with that of our distinguished fellow citizen, who ascended the stage, and united and associated their patriotic virtues in an eloquent eulogium, like him they may be called upon to perform the same devotional exercise. If that should ever take place, and if the most impressive description of human kindness, exalted and meritorious actions, can inculcate into the feelings of an assemblage those hallowed feelings that eject forth respirations of adoration for the *Creator* and love for the *creature*, it will be on that occasion.

Of the early life and character of Mr. Wilberforce we know but little; and if we did, neither time nor prudence would allow of that description at present. We must necessarily leave that, as well as many other of his important acts and legislative duties, for his biographer, and pass on to notice that portion of his life that he lived for Africa—for *us*—for Christianity, humanity and virtue.

Were it not for his great efforts in abolishing slavery and the slave trade, he could never have been particularly dear to us. We should not now have been called upon by the strongest impulse of duty to render to his memory a tribute of gratitude as our benefactor—encircle his name with a halo of glory—spread garlands around his grave, or transmit to posterity those noble deeds performed by the man we loved and adored.

Many great men and valuable christians have paid the

* The Hon. John Sergeant.

debt of nature; and while we could sympathize with their sufferings, we have seldom been left heirs to such a devotional respect; if it should again be our lot, I feel satisfied (that as soon as our sensibilities are duly awakened) that gratitude, as an inherent property of our nature, will be liberally bestowed.

It may be proper to take some notice of his birth and family. His ancestors for many years were successfully engaged in trade at Hull, in East Yorkshire, England. His great grandfather was a Mr. William Wilberforce was once the governor of Beverley, (in the same borough,) in the year 1670. The grandson of this gentleman married Sarah, the daughter of Mr. John Thornton, in the year 1711. There were two sons and two daughters, the issue of this marriage. William the elder died without issue in the year 1780. Robert the younger married Miss Elizabeth Bird, the aunt of the present Bishops of Winchester and Chester. The late Mr. William Wilberforce was the only son of Mr. Robert Wilberforce. There were two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah.

Mr. Wilberforce was born at Hull on the 24th day of August, 1759. "He went to St. Johns College, Cambridge, as a fellow commoner, at the usual age, and there formed an intimacy with Mr. Pitt, which remained unbroken till his death." Mr. Wilberforce did not obtain academical honours, and such honours were rarely sought at that time by those who wore a fellow commoner's gown; but he was distinguished as a man of elegant attainments and acknowledged classical taste. Dr. Milner, the late President of Queen's College, was in the same University, and was another intimate of Mr. Wilberforce, and accompanied him and Mr. Pitt in a tour to Nice. We mention this fact, "that his first serious impressions of religion were derived from his conversations with Dr. Milner during their journey. And to him must be awarded the high distinction of having led Mr. Wilberforce's mind into the paths of pleasantness and peace."

Mr. Wilberforce appears to have early imbibed the idea that the great object of living is to live well. "The great principle of life, it is said, is to resist putrefaction, and to a

certain extent maintain a temperature different from that of surrounding bodies." The fulfilment of these objects appears to have been his peculiar aim, and became early adopted into the standard of his life. To resist vice must have been a common energy of his nature. That he must have been early loved and admired, will be sufficiently understood by his having attained his majority at the age of twenty-two, and is found representing his native town in the councils of the nation, at an age when the youthful pulsations generally beat with folly and extravagance, rather than savour of that sound and serious reflection so necessary to guide the mind into a systematic train of thought, calculated to render it capable of relieving the wants and regulating the burthens of their fellow citizens. Even at this early period we find him performing the solemn duty of administering the oaths to members. In 1783, he seconded an address of thanks on peace. The same year we find him opposing Mr. Fox's India bill, and in 1785, he spoke in favour of a reform in Parliament. The following year he succeeded in carrying through the Commons, a bill for amending the criminal law, but it was thrown out in the Lord's, on account of its imperfection in form.

Such was the calmness of his disposition, the extent of his kindness, that it was painful to men who frequently indulged in sarcastic virulence themselves to see others use it to him. In 1787, in a debate on the commercial relations with France, Mr. Burke having provoked Mr. Wilberforce into some acrimony of retort, when "Mr. Pitt checked him for his imprudence, by telling him that it was as far beyond his powers as his wishes, to contend with such a man as Burke in abuse and personality."

Having noticed his early career, we now, with pride, approach that field of successful labour whose harvest has restored to the sons of Africa their inherent rights and natural privileges. It was in the year 1787, that Mr. Clarkson called on Mr. Wilberforce, and requested him to present the subject to Parliament—a request that he heartily accepted. It was in the year 1788, that Mr. Wilberforce first gave notice that it was shortly his intention to bring the question be-

fore the House of Commons for the abolition of the slave trade, but indisposition prevented him. Accordingly on the 9th of May in the same year, Mr. Pitt introduced it for him. Such was the estimation in which his talents were then held, (he being only 29 years of age) that Mr. Pitt expressed his conviction that the "question could not have been confided to abler hands."

It is a fact worthy of notice, that Mr. Wilberforce, who was the great champion of that question for twenty years in Parliament, and the general who led them on to victory, and won the laurels, neither introduced it at first, nor at the time of its final passage. But we find Messrs. Pitt and Fox, who were warm opponents to each other on almost all questions, united on this, and the latter one introducing the question for the last time, followed the example of his predecessor, Mr. Pitt, in calling the attention of the house to the subject by introducing it with the following eloquent eulogium on the character of Mr. Wilberforce: He said "that no man, either from his talents, eloquence, zeal in the cause, or from the estimation he was then held in that house, and the country, could be better qualified for the task."

The result of the first attempt was that they only succeeded in getting a resolution passed pledging the House, that in its next session, it would consider the subject of the "slave trade." The agitation of the question by the passage of a resolution to consider the same at the next session, threw the enemies of the measure on the alert, who exerted themselves as much as possible to defeat it.

The time having arrived for the discussion of the subject, and Mr. Wilberforce having recovered from his indisposition, on the 12th of May, 1789, moved the order of the day for the House to take into consideration the petitions that had been presented against the slave trade. And on moving that the evidence adduced on the slave trade be referred to a committee, he prefaced his motion with a speech of three hours and a half in length, opening the horrible atrocities of the trade, and its effects on Africa, the planters and the nation, with so much force, and power, that Mr. Burke, who followed in support of the motion, bestows on it the following elab-

orate panegyric : " that it was masterly, impressive, and eloquent. He had laid down his principles so admirably, and with so much order and force, that his speech had equalled any thing he had ever heard in modern oratory, and that perhaps it had never been excelled in ancient times."

Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, and Lord Grenville followed in its support ; the latter in noticing the speech of his honourable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, characterizes it as as the " most masterly, impressive and eloquent speech he ever heard ; while it did honour to him, it entitled him to the thanks of the House, of the people of England, all Europe, and the latest posterity."

It would be doing injustice to the memory of departed worth, not to notice that Messrs. Pitt, Fox, Burke, Grenville and William Smith, stood by and faithfully supported Mr. Wilberforce in all his motions and movements with regard to the measure ; and we might exhaust language, and fail to bestow on him a higher encomium on either his talents or his virtues, than when we say they chose him as their leader. Men whose talents and legislative knowledge lighted up all Europe with their fame. They were a brilliant constellation of intellectual geniuses, that bedizzened almost every star that came within their orbit. Yet we find these converging and encircling around Mr. Wilberforce, attracted by his inimitable powers, receiving his radiant light and emitting it forth, like the planetary system around our sun.

But a short interval of time succeeded, until the discussion of the question was again attempted ; but the opponents of the measure successfully resisted it, by conjuring up the " imaginary evils" that would arise to the merchants and planters, and called for further evidence, which ended in the passage of Sir William Dolben's bill for the regulation of the trade.

Mr. Wilberforce, early in 1790, again revived the subject, and was similarly defeated. But on the 18th of April of the same year, he again succeeded in getting up a discussion of the subject, which he opened with such power, and poured forth such a flood of light upon the subject, that the admirers of his former memorable speech of the 12th of May, declared that it was far surpassed by his late effort ; that the long de-

lays of his opponents had given him time to recruit both in energy and materials. This speech is said to have been a powerful effort. He was followed by Messrs. Pitt, Fox, [and Smith, but was again defeated by a majority of 75.

To a man of ordinary abilities, this would have been truly discouraging, but to him who had pledged his life to the cause, defeat only led him to change positions, exhibit a broader front, and prepare to discharge a volley of truth from a more powerful battery.

On the 3d of April 1792, he again moved the abolition, but was opposed with more virulence than ever.

Many of the opponents were talented, and interested; and all that sophistry and evasion could command, were levelled against the cause and its advocates. We learn by this discussion, to the credit of our own country, that those epithets, "fanatic, incendiary," &c. are of foreign extraction. If we trace their derivation, we shall be able to find that they have ever been used by the advocates of slavery, in the place of arguments, so when they appear on our soil, they are clothed in *borrowed livery*. The resolution was opposed by Messrs. Dundas, Bailey, Vaughn, Col. Thornton, and Mr. Grosvenor. To give you a sample of their arguments, it may be proper to cite to you a few remarks that fell from the latter gentleman. He said, the slave trade was certainly not an amiable trade. Neither was that of a butcher, yet it was a necessary one. There was great reason to doubt the propriety of the present motion. He had twenty reasons for disapproving it; the first was that it was impossible: he need not, therefore give the rest. Parliament might indeed relinquish the trade; but to whom? To foreigners, who would continue it, without the humane regulations, that were applied it to by his countrymen.

The motion was again lost, and the motion of Mr. Dundas for the gradual abolition of the trade, was carried by a majority of sixty-eight.

On the 25th of April, the house having again resumed the consideration of the subject, Mr. Dundas having brought in his bill, moved "that it should be unlawful to import any African negroes into any of the British Colonies, in ships owned or navigated by British subjects, at any time after the 1st of Janu-

ary, 1800," which was warmly discussed, and an amendment was offered, to substitute 1793 in its stead, which was lost by a division, by a majority of forty.

Sir Edward Knatchbull, finding that there was a disposition in the house to bring the subject to a conclusion, chose a middle passage, and accordingly moved "that the year 1796 be substituted in the room of 1800, which was carried by a majority of nineteen.

During the years 1784-5-6-7-8, and 9, Mr. Wilberforce agitated the question by nine distinct motions. Although only a part of these motions were for the total abolition of the trade, yet they all so materially affected it, that had he have been successful, each would have shorn off its asperity and barbarity, so that its advocates would have nothing left to cherish their inhuman appetites, nor sufficient interest to have sustained them in supporting the odious traffic.

The first was a bill to "prohibit the supply of slaves to foreign colonies," which was carried in the lower house, but was thrown out in the Lords, by a majority of 45 to 4. The next was a motion "to promote a pacific relation with France," which he again repeated, but with the same ill success.

Mr. Wilberforce, never wearied in well doing, even when the most gloomy prospects surrounded his efforts, he was coolly calculating new projects of victory—raising new fortifications for defence, and feeling the pulsations of his enemies in new veins. Accordingly, on the 26th of February 1795, he again brought forward his original motion for the abolition of the trade, but as usual, it was unsuccessful; and on motion of Mr. Dundas, it was postponed for six months. On the 18th of February the following year, it met with the same fate.

In the same year he again asked leave to bring in a "bill to abolish the slave trade for a limited time," which was carried on the third reading by a majority of 45; but in the next stage, after a speech from Mr. Dundas, it was lost by a majority of four. Mr. Wilberforce having felt elated by the effect of an address having been presented to the crown, for the protection of colonial interests, was determined to occupy the advantages it might present, for the final adjustment of the question. In the year 1798, he again renewed his motion, but on a division

of the house, there were found eighty-three for it, and eighty-seven against it.

Mr. Wilberforce remained undismayed by these different disappointments, and on the success of his next movement, he calculated on the influence that the acquisition of Mr. Canning would bring to the cause. In 1799 he again brought up his motion, which was warmly supported by all his former colleagues, with the addition of Mr. Canning, and to their astonishment, on a division of the house, it was lost by a majority of eight.

There were two other attempts made to carry the measure partially, one for the "prohibition of foreign slaves," the other for making "a certain portion of Africa sacred to liberty." The question now having been so long and powerfully agitated, Mr. Wilberforce, like a skilful physician, "thought it imprudent longer to press the abolition as an annual measure, but to allow members time to digest the eloquence that had so long and faithfully been bestowed upon it for so many years, thinking that probably some new circumstances might favour its introduction."

Accordingly, nothing more was done until the year 1804, except moving for certain papers, during which time he assured the house that he should again agitate the question at a future session.

We are now approaching a new period, and a fruitful era in the history of this long delayed, though important question. While it promised to England and all Europe the greatest blessings, it presented to Africa an opening dawn that might radiate her whole realm with a bright refulgency, whose beaming rays seemed to speak in the language of the poet—

“———O ye winds and waves,

Waft the glad tidings to the land of slaves;
Proclaim on Guinea's coast by Gambia's side,
As far as Niger rolls his eastern tide,
That thy sons shall no longer be driven
So far from happiness and Heaven.”

In this interval of space, Mr. Wilberforce, although so often defeated, had sufficiently learned the encampments and bulwarks of the enemy, to understand what materials were necessary to be obtained to carry the citadel. He lost no time,

and prepared accordingly, having learned the fact, (that ought to throw the whole world in amazement) that one point they meant to establish, was the natural inferiority of the African—his incapability of holding and enjoying civil and religious liberty, and that they were not legitimate heirs to the rights of man. To defeat this point, Mr. Wilberforce and his friends that were in conjunction with him, found it necessary to establish a college at Clapham, a village in Surrey, about four leagues south of London, for the education of African pupils.

It may seem somewhat astonishing, yet it is not less true, that in so enlightened a period of the world, such doctrines should have been either believed or advocated in England, (at a time when she could challenge the world to produce as many eminent philosophers and statesmen,) that the intellectual quality of mankind was regulated by the *laws* of lights and shades. Yet we may be somewhat awakened from our revery when we reflect that we so often find some men the dupes of measures, while others are borne forward by interested motives to complete the execution of some plan that may promote their evil designs. For such is the character of many politicians, when they assume the doctrine of *expediency*, that they resort to dazzling speculations, in defence of opinions which can never be sustained by reason, or advocated by reasonable men, to give them the colouring of virtue, and thus insure the execution of designs, at once inhuman and impious. That this must have been the situation of the opponents to the “abolition of the slave trade” is so self-evident that it needs no illustration. To have established the fact that Africa was once the cradle of science—the seat of civilization—and her sons its early votaries and boasted cultivators, who in their search after wisdom had scanned the “azure pathway of the heavens,” and laid the foundation of some of the most abstruse sciences, they might only have referred to the Ptolemian age, or to that *mammoth* receptacle of their collected wisdom, the Alexandrian Library, that by the decree of Omar, was consumed by fire, with all its philosophical treasures. The light of its conflagration was followed by an age of darkness; and its incensed smoke appears in its fall to have brought down barbarism and superstition. Let history mourn the event.

Or when we approach more modern times, we find that the National Institute of France have examined the ancient college of La-Marche, where African pupils were educated, declared that there existed no difference between them and the Europeans, except the colour of their skins.

Europe, previous to that period, had been a nursery for the improvement of African intellect, yet it appears that the doctrine of African inferiority was so well grounded, that not only Mr. Wilberforce and his associates had to establish a college for their instruction, so that in advocating their cause they might plead for the rights of human beings, but the celebrated Abbe Gregoire felt called upon to write a work, entitled "An inquiry concerning the intellectual and moral faculties of Negroes," to prove that they were not of the brute creation.

We now approach the year 1804, as fixed by Mr. Wilberforce for again bringing the question before the house. His reasons and prospects for now agitating the question was on the account of the union that had taken place between England and Ireland, and his knowledge that the Irish members were favorable to the abolition. Therefore he recorded it to the credit of the *Irish* name, and to the honour of their country, that they were four centuries in advance of England in that national purity which bestows on mankind the enjoyment of those rights and privileges granted by his Creator. As early as the reign of Henry VII. they were engaged in a domestic traffic in human beings; but having experienced a general calamity, which they imputed as a judgment from heaven on account of its wickedness they abolished it.

On the 30th of March Mr. Wilberforce asked leave to renew his bill for the abolition of the slave trade within a limited time. The sublimity of his speech on this occasion surpassed all his former eloquence. A warm debate ensued, both sides having recruited in resources as well as members, it was truly animated, which terminated in favor of the abolitionists, by a majority of 124 to 49. The bill was now sent up to the house of lords, but the discussion was postponed to the next year.

In 1805, Mr. Wilberforce again renewed his motion for the former year, but it met with the same vigorous opposition, and was finally lost by a majority of seven.

Mr. Wilberforce never again introduced the question. He now found that it was necessary to prepare for the next session of parliament, when it was generally believed the bill would become a law.

Mr. Wilberforce having now like a towering eagle in its aerial flight, been faithfully supported by Messrs. Pitt and Fox, for a period of nineteen years, their soaring spirits could in prospect see the most triumphant success. Amidst this scene of enjoyment they were interrupted by the death of Mr. Pitt, in January 1806, who, like Moses of old, had ascended Pisgah's top, but was not permitted to enjoy the promised land, and in him fell not only a powerful advocate, but the right wing of the *E pluribus unum*.

On the death of Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox were called to the ministry; the former was a fit substitute for Mr. Pitt, both as a minister of the crown and the cause. Thus was Mr. Wilberforce again ready to take his flight, and after calculating on the effect of ministerial influence he advised Mr. Fox to bring forward the question, which he did on the 10th of June, 1806, enforced by a very able speech, which after some considerable debate it was finally carried by a majority of 114 to 15.

Mr. Wilberforce, immediately after the division, moved an address to his majesty, which was carried without a division. The resolutions of the lower house, together with the address, were sent to the lords, which with the efforts of Lord Grenville were carried by a majority of 100 to 36.

Thus passed both houses of the legislature a bill that for its value, whether we regard the interest of Africa, Europe, or the world, is unequalled in legislation, and one which Mr. Fox regarded as the highest glory of his administration. But how often are the "pleasures of life illusory." Before the bill had received the royal sanction, Mr. Fox was numbered with the dead, and in him fell a giant of abolition, and the left wing of the golden eagle, when he had barely reached the shores of victory, before a friend could greet him at the end of his pilgrimage, his spirit had fled to join that of its departed associate.

Although the bill had passed both houses of the legislature,

a circumstance took place which threw great terror into the ranks of the abolitionists, and caused them much to fear, that at the moment when they had expected that it would receive the royal sanction, they might have to perform the whole work over again. The reason of this was his majesty being displeased with the introduction of the Roman Catholic's bill into the house of commons, had signified his intention of displacing the ministry; therefore all their exertions were put into requisition to have the bill adopted in detail, and to have it printed; accordingly, on the 24th of March, 1807, the whole was completed. And on the next day at 11 o'clock in the morning, his majesty's message was delivered to the *ministers* of the crown, that they were to wait upon him and deliver up the seals of their offices.

The commission for the royal assent to this bill, among others had been obtained. And Mr. Clarkson relates that "the commission was opened by Lord Chancellor Erskine, who was accompanied by Lords Holland and Auckland; and as the clock struck twelve, just when the sun was in its meridian splendour to witness this august act, of the establishment of magna charta for Africa in Britain, and to sanction it by its most glorious beams, it was completed."

It was indeed a time for England, for Africa, and the friends of humanity all over the world to rejoice, at one of the most glorious victories ever recorded in the history of legislation—a victory achieved without blood-stained banners. Unlike the revolution of France, it was not the "illegitimate offspring of a bloody night." It was the overthrow of public opinion by the triumph of reason. It was placed on a permanent basis, because a virtuous posterity would vindicate and sustain its adoption. It left the enemies of the measure without a temple to erect their hopes for further invasions on Africa. It marked for tyrants a moral and legislative boundary, and left them no charter to protect them from the omnipotence of the law, and without a panoply to shield their degrading infamy from the curse of time.

To its friends all was hope and rejoicing. The valiant band who had so faithfully sustained this great cause could look with pride on Mr. Wilberforce, who was the leader of

the mighty phalanx—the director of their mighty genius—the general who won the victory and wears its laurels.

As a government measure, the triumph might have been given to Lord Grenville, but it was fairly given to Mr. Wilberforce. He was hailed with enthusiastic acclamations on reëntering the house after his access, and the country reëchoed it from shore to shore. Thus, in the language of the poet—

“When Wilberforce, the minister of grace,
The new Las Casas of a ruined race,
With angel might opposed the rage of hell,
And fought like Michael till the dragon fell.”

The contest now being over Mr. Wilberforce's fame shone forth like a towering monument associating in itself the noblest qualities, and bearing for its inscription the incomparable motto of Virtue, Liberty and Independence, an object for tyrants to fear, Christians to admire, and nations to love.

On the following year he was returned for Yorkshire, although a subscription of £100,000 sterling was necessary to secure his election. It is said that such was the warmth of the friends of humanity in his support that double that amount was secured. He continued in Parliament until the year 1825, when he retired into private life, to share those convivial joys that domestic life affords, that are sought for in vain in the tempestuous billows that distract the affairs of men in the full tide of public life. It is not our intention to refer either to the course he pursued or the measures he advocated during this part of his parliamentary career; suffice it to say, that he was considered the father of the House, and that the greatest indulgences were extended to him as a national benefactor.

Having now faintly noticed that great act, the recollection of which inspires us with a solemn regard for his exertions in behalf of “the poor and oppressed,” we shall pass on to notice those peculiar and distinguishing traits of character that endeared him to his associates. Mr. Wilberforce not only distinctly understood, but unerringly practised the several duties of man as an individual, a member of society, a guardian of national interests, a lover of his God, and a promoter of religion.

About the year 1797, a time when his mind was deeply absorbed in the slave trade, he became the author of a celebrated work, entitled "A popular view of Christianity," that secured for him a valuable reputation in the religious world, not only for the intrinsic elegance of its style, but for the correctness of its principles; probably the best eulogium that can be pronounced upon it is, when we say that it has gone through forty editions, and been translated into different languages, and has been adopted into almost every library in this country, and Europe. This itself entitles him to another claim on public gratitude, viz. that of being a defender of the *faith*, and protector of the established church. There can be little doubt but that he was induced to write this work with the hope that the extension of the doctrines would aid the cause of abolition. The public mind at that period had become so corrupted with the metaphysical speculations of infidel and deistical theorists, that a book containing the simple doctrines of Christianity as practised in the established church, could scarcely have gained admittance into families in the higher walks of life under a less respectable recommendation. Notwithstanding the abundance of his labours, the multiplied claims the public made on his time and talents, that sufficient time was scarcely left for his body to receive that relaxation so necessary to prepare it to encounter new trials and meet new difficulties. He appeared determined to occupy every situation that could be filled with honour, or enable him to shed an illustrious example to those around him. We therefore find that, in the same year, he became united in wedlock to Miss Barbara Spooner, the daughter of an opulent banker at Birmingham, with whom he lived in the utmost harmony and conjugal fidelity until his death. They were blest with four sons and two daughters, all of which under their parental care, and the protection of Him whom he daily supplicated, grew up to maturity. The former with their mother have survived their venerable *head*. The latter, for whom he cherished the most fond and endearing hopes, and with whom his affections were indissolubly united, by all the ties that can unite the relation of father and child, or parents and their offspring, have, as if it were, to test his Christian vir-

tues, or the reality of that offering that he had so often and solemnly dedicated to the God he loved and served, have been summoned in the bloom of youth from the presence of their parents, their earthly affections and fond endearments, by the destroying hand of time, to become the tenants of an *early grave*. The elder died four years ago, unmarried. The younger was married to the Rev. J. James, and survived her marriage less than twelve months. Grievous as was this afflicting dispensation, the morning of her decease found him at church performing his usual devotion. It is said that she bore so strongly the impress of her father's beautiful mind that he never recovered her loss.

If we follow him in domestic life, we find in him all those virtues that form an endearing husband, an affectionate parent, a social companion, a kind and benevolent neighbour—not only seeking the happiness of those around him, but extending the same illustrious example to society that distinguishes him as a Christian, a legislator and a lawgiver.

If we call into being those pecuniary considerations that the world calls wealth, Mr. Wilberforce having descended from an opulent parentage was born an heir to no personal wants that fancy might invent or fortune purchase; yet we find that these birthright enjoyments were to trivial for the nobleness of his nature. His capacious mind soon quit the vain pleasures of the domestic hearth, where the abundance of nature lay treasured at his bidding, and engaged in an extensive field of speculation, where the corruption of his country had to be purchased by the enlargement of his genius and the fruit of his industry.

Mr. Wilberforce possessed a combination of good qualities calculated to render him agreeable in all his different situations of life. He was so uniform and unassuming in all his domestic acts, that he seemed almost invariably to adapt himself to the peculiar habits and dispositions of the company with whom he was associated. With children he was animated and playful—with statesmen he was a counsellor—with the aged and infirm he was a consoler—in short, he appeared at home in the society of all, and by all he was generally loved and esteemed. He was small of stature, and na-

ture appears not to have adorned his features for personal admiration. He was happy in conversation, and when his countenance was animated it was truly striking. His memory was richly stored with classical illusions; a natural poetry of mind constantly displayed itself; a melodious cadence marked every thought, and every expression of the thought. He was seldom impassioned, and not often energetic; his tones were mellifluous and persuasive, exactly according to the sentiment they conveyed. It may be said of his eloquence, while it delighted and awakened the imagination, it convinced the heart. It did not awe it into obedience, but peacefully and intuitively led the senses of the audience in the train of the orator.

In the natural power of eloquence there is something truly mysterious. If language be an emanation from God, eloquence when advocating the cause of truth and justice, must breathe forth divinity. In every age it has only had to call forth its powers, command, and it was done. If we look back into the retrospective vale, when the creator spoke and said, "Let us make man," or when most noble Festus *trembled* before the towering eloquence of Paul, or to the history of Greece and Rome, it has always possessed the same irresistible power. Probably we may look in vain in modern times to find it possessing so much of its primitive powers and original excellence, as when it was called into action to extinguish the slave trade. Those associate virtues that were blended in the subject of our eulogy, together with his Christian benevolence, and exalted kindness that breathed through his words and actions, were well calculated to inspire his opponents with a regard for the honesty of his motives, and when his emphatic tones were mellowed with the milk of christianity, we feel not astonished that among even the dazzling lights of his cotemporaries, he was considered the brightest of the train.

We now follow him down to the present year. Mr. Wilberforce having spent a long and useful life; undergone excessive toils, and acquired for himself an extensive fame among all nations, for his advocacy in behalf of *abolition*, kept beholding his country wiping from her dominions the internal guilt of that horrible system, seemed willing to retire in peace.

and not again suffer his quiet to be disturbed by the turmoils of life. But his labours of love were not yet finished, another great work was yet to be performed, which may no doubt be said his last public act, viz: his protest against the American Colonization Society. That institution having appeared before him in its giant form, he recognized in its interior his old adversary, that *arch enemy* of liberty, with whom he had spent his whole life contending against. That Protean disciple of his Satanic majesty stood upon the *altar* clad in the *livery of the sanctuary*—the *ermine of the bench*, and the *robe of the statesman*. Notwithstanding he loved the colony of Liberia, and the civilization of Africa, but to use the language of the “protest,” he saw that to the cause of liberty throughout the world, it was a *total obstruction*—he raised his dying hand and smote the *monster*.

My friends, if this were the only benefit he had ever conferred on either Africa or her descendants, we should sound forth his praise. When he might have peacefully slept in blissful security, enjoying a fame as enduring as time, he risked it all against the popularity of an institution, almost incorporated with the pride and patriotism of one of the greatest republics on the globe, to save us from its grasp, and from that monster that had withered the influence and prospects of his own beloved country.

Having now closed his public career of half a century, with an act that was immediately connected with our interests; and having undergone the vicissitudes of upwards of seventy years, he could in retrospection look back at the overthrow of public opinion; at the re-establishment of religion and morality on the ruins of vice and absolute degeneracy. He looked forward to the promise given to the righteous—“well done, good and faithful servant,” thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord, and quietly closed his eyes in death on the 29th day of July last, when his noble spirit took its flight to receive those blessings prepared from the foundation.

To mourn over the event, would be to desire that heaven should be deprived of one of her richest jewels, and that our benefactor should have still lingered out a few more short years, subject to the endurance of all those pains and diseases

that belong to the infirmity of age. Yet we discover that in the demise of our friends, that the common feelings of our nature, in the abundance of their affection, overflow our senses, and frequently drown our better judgment in the flood.

Death always brings a solemnity, over which the feelings of our nature weeps, on whomsoever his cold and icy hand is laid; sorrow must be the consequence—the “peace of some living being must be slain.” Though the grave be open to receive the humblest of God’s creatures, yet there is some one to shed tears upon it—a wife is bereft of a beloved husband—a mother of a darling babe—a sister of a kind and devoted brother—some child fatherless—some friend friendless—some small circle of gaiety repressed—some house of joy converted into a house of mourning.

In the present instance, a wife is deprived of one of the most amiable of husbands—four sons one of the kindest of fathers—the friends of liberty and of man, a bold and intrepid champion—the nation, one of her proudest ornaments.—Let us pour forth our sympathies for the family and friends of the departed. If we have tears to shed, let us mingle them with theirs, and pour forth the noblest feelings of gratitude for departed worth; and let us resign ourselves to the will of that Providence “that giveth and taketh,” and return him thanks for preserving him so long to plead the cause of his poor and oppressed brethren.

With us the shock of his death cannot be so sensibly felt; to him we were not united by that social intercourse that warms and endears the personal affections, and frequently terminates in forming the holiest relations of life.

Ours were not of that cast. He having lived out the days allotted to man, and usefully employed them in erecting a structure of liberty that stands an honourable memento of his labours, we have fixed our aspirations of love on the fruit of his exertions. Though the mortal remains of Mr. Wilberforce may be entombed within the narrow precincts of the grave, the theme of our admiration still lives, and will continue to live, an object for philanthropists to admire and tyrants to fear—so that with us he can never die. The fabric of liberty may fall; but if it should, the crashing ruins would

ery out, in the spirit of its founder, to the friends of humanity *all over the world*, to erect another temple on its foundation, and dedicate it as a *trophy* to christianity; and inscribe on its *immeasurable front* the indestructible name of *William Wilberforce*. And the historian that shall record the event will not only associate his name with the spirit of liberty, but when songs may be sung to their honour, the minstrel will

dedicate his lays,

To offer them notes of adoration and praise.

Thus terminated the earthly career of *one*, that the exercise of language in all its boasted strength will fail to do him honour. As a Christian he stood like the church upon the rock of ages—as a philanthropist he shone like the *sun of liberty* (with its healing rays) lighting up the dark chasms of slavery and oppression—as a man, he concentrated in himself those refulgent virtues that rendered him a model for the world; and after having “fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith,” he with that spirit of humility that characterized his whole life, desired to be interred privately, with those becoming ceremonials that exhibit Christian meekness.

Although this was his dying request, the pride of Britons could not consent that *he* whose life had been spent in their service, and who had achieved for his country so much national good, should be buried without national honours. She decreed that the remains of the champion of liberty, who had exposed the iniquity of the slave trade, and overthrew the temple of immorality, should be deposited in Westminster Abbey, along with Granville Sharpe, who had interpreted the British constitution, by which the ground on which they “trod became holy, and was consecrated to the genius” of universal liberty—with the illustrious Newton, the immortal Bacon, and the collected wisdom of the nation, and beside his esteemed compatriots and coworkers in the same glorious cause, Messrs. Pitt and Fox. Thus again, after a period of twenty-seven years, has that celebrated triumvirate been united, whose matchless eloquence, like an unconquerable torrent in its roaming flood, swept the inhuman traffic from Britain’s coast.

Mr. Wilberforce was not only spared to accomplish the noble work, but was to have the pleasure of examining its operations, as if that he were to be the messenger that should bear to departed spirits the rewards of their toil, and the blessed and happy influence of those exertions on the great family of mankind. It must have been to him a theme of pride, not only to see that the slave trade was abolished by other nations, but that under no national flag could kidnapped slaves be brought into the ports of the world, without being subject to the laws of piracy.

It must have gladdened his heart in his dying moments to see domestic slavery about being swept from the dominions of his country, and that their free coloured population were advancing in education and refinement, and occupying distinguished situations of public trust; and that the Republic of Hayti had taken her stand among the nations of the earth; and that when he cast his eyes across the broad Atlantic sea, (to the United States,) he could there see the happy influence of those principles that he so long cherished, had swept from half her territory the yoke of the bondsman; and that they, too, were, by their rapid improvements in the blessings of education and public spirit, fit subjects to enjoy the boon of heaven.

Having seen all this, like good old Simeon he was satisfied "to depart in peace," and put on immortality, to enjoy the regions of glory. Unlike the patriotic Emmet, let his epitaph be written. "Let it not be left to other men and other times to do justice to his character," for those who know his motives dare assert them; for the same redeeming spirit is abroad in our own land that accomplished the destruction of slavery and the slave trade. Let it not only be written in ineffacable letters on tables of stone, but let us imprint his worth on our memories, and inscribe on the portals of his fame "peace and good will to men."

Although you have already been detained, and probably too long, we must not suffer the present opportunity to escape without awakening in ourselves that national feeling, which as true patriots we are bound to cherish.

We will now leave the shores of Britain, and review the

history of our own country. She too has passed a law prohibiting the slave trade. She too has had her heroes for abolition, and at no period like the present has the boasted sons of humanity and justice more powerfully stood forward to advocate the rights of the oppressed descendants of Africa. The same glorious success awaits *us* as the inhabitants of the old world. We, too, have had a Benezet, a Jay, a Rush, a Franklin, a Wistar, a Lay, a Tyson and a Livingston, as well as many others, that time would fail us to enumerate—men who have shone in the most important situations of private, as well as public life, and may be justly considered the pride of the nation, and on whom the history of the present generation points to as the *departed fathers of the republic*.

Of the living we can truly say they are as valiant a band as ever stood by a friend or met a foe.

When we speak of America we do it with those feelings of respect that are due to it as our country—not as the land of our adoption, nor with the alienated breath of foreigners; but with the instinctive love of native born citizens. We look upon her as favoured by Providence above all others, for the geniality of her climate and fruitfulness of her soil, and, in the language of Dr. Rush as possessing “a compound of most climates of the world”—a country said to be the “freest on the globe,” where not only the liberty of the press is guaranteed, but the Christian and the infidel, the Mahometan and pagan, the deist and the atheist, the Jew and Gentile, are not only protected in their faith, but may propagate their doctrines unmolested—a country where the oppressed of all nations and castes seek shelter from oppression, and become incorporated into the spirit of her laws, and rally round her standard of liberty, **EXCEPT THOSE OF AFRICAN ORIGIN.**

We admire her declaration of rights, and worship it as our holy creed; but we mourn over its fallen spirit as we would over some ancient ruin, whose splendour and magnificence had attracted the gaze of an admiring world. We point not to the graves of our relatives and immediate ancestors as the graves of departed Africans, but as American citizens; many of whom have *fallen in battle* with the revolutionary fathers in their arduous struggle for liberty; whose blood have moist-

ened this sacred soil, and whose tomb-stones, if erected, would not only direct us to the depositories of departed heroes, but would light our path to a patriot's grave. There are yet many of our aged fathers, who were scions of the British colonies that have survived the struggle, and have been incorporated in that bond of union that forms the national standard, and have grown up through American liberty, but who have never enjoyed the glorious privilege of citizenship. They have *weakened* with her *strength*, and their heads that are now blossomed for a future world, stand as evidence against American cruelty, the injustice of her policy, and the spirit of her laws.

The slave trade was not only beheld with horror by the good and great of all nations, but its destruction was effected by their union and co-operation. If we take into consideration who were the first forerunners and coadjutors in effecting the abolition of the slave trade it may no doubt awaken our *state* and *sectional* pride, to find that in this land of Penn, and our own "city of brotherly love," the society of Friends, those pioneers of liberty, peace, and moral reform, were the first public body that ever associated to promote the cause. They preceded the yearly meeting of the Society of Friends in London thirty-one years. Their first yearly meeting on the subject was in 1696. They again met in 1711, 1754, 1774, 1776. The legislative spirit of Pennsylvania has early adopted for her polar star, the principles of her immortal founder and celebrated lawgiver, and she continued not only marching forward herself in the cause of freedom, but has led the nations of the earth in her path. It is to the exertions of the Society of Friends, and the moral influence they inculcated, more than to any other set of people, that we are to ascribe that union in the religious communities, that taught them to discard sectional prejudices, and unite themselves in a body for the purpose of aiding the oppressed Africans and their descendants. In the year 1780, they formed a society, that was known, as it continues to be, by the name and title of "the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage;" and Benjamin Franklin was chosen presi-

dent. Thus, the philosopher who had signed the declaration of American independence, and “drew down the lightning from heaven,” and had aided in achieving the liberty of his country, thought it no indignity to stand at the helm, and guide the destinies of an institution, that had avowed for its creed, “that it is not for us to inquire why in the creation of mankind that the inhabitants were formed of different complexion; it was sufficient to know that they were the work of an Almighty hand,” and that they should enjoy the privilege of his creatures.

This society petitioned parliament on the subject of abolishing the slave trade, and avowed its coöperation in every measure that might tend to its promotion; and the most happy effects have attended its exertions. On the death of Franklin, Drs. Benjamin Rush, and Wistar have filled the presidential chair, and it has only been vacated by the termination of their existence. It is now filled by our learned and distinguished fellow citizen, William Rawle, Esq. These gentlemen have not only been the pride and boast of our state, but they have been distinguished cultivators of American science, and have shed such a lustre around their professions, that they have been styled the ornaments of the age. May the march of Pennsylvania be onward; but if she should depart from the spirit of such ancestors, she will be on the road to degeneracy.

We have made this departure from our subject, to exhibit the happy influence the early abolitionists of our country had in effecting the passage of a law by which the subject of our eulogy has received unfading renown; the effect of which has been, that the attention of nations has been taught to regard his moral worth; and that wherever his name has been known, his praises have been uttered forth with that heart-felt regard, to which they believed the merit of his exertions were so richly entitled. By his life, we find there is a reward for the righteous. By his death, we learn, that the true road to fame is in advocating the cause of the oppressed.

My friends, of the millions who sound forth his praises, probably there are only thousands who do him honour. Those who advocate slavery and perpetual servitude, are unworthy of kneeling at his sacred shrine—those who are opposed to

the natural elevation of the man of colour to the rights and privileges of free citizens, are unworthy of paying him devotion—those who have not adopted for the line of their conduct towards their fellow men, the golden rule, “do unto others as you would they should do unto you,” are unfit to utter forth his name. As well might an angel of darkness bow down and worship the prince of light and glory, as for men possessing such a motley of inconsistencies, to attempt to pay tribute to his memory. But his fame is fixed, the influence of his exertions is felt, and the news that *a great and good man is fallen*, has been uttered in such pathetic strains, that babes have caught the sound, and are beginning to lisp forth his name, which must be transmitted to posterity enrobed in the mantle of Christian virtue, that nothing can tarnish but our degeneracy. If we should fail to render ourselves worthy of so powerful an advocate, we shall retard the influence of those virtues. If we shall fail to walk in those paths of elevation, marked out for us by the laws of our country, and the achievements of philanthropy, we shall not only destroy the prospects of those who come after us, but will weaken the cause of those who come forward for our support. Let that not be our course. Let us march forward with a firm, unvarying step, not only occupying every inch of ground acquired by those philanthropists who are labouring in our behalf, but let the strength of our characters, by the influence of their examples, acquire for us new territory, and the name of **WILLIAM WILBERFORCE** will not only burnish into brighter fame, but will serve as a lamp, the light of whose blaze will grow broader and higher, until it shall have not only warmed the most remote regions, by “encircling the globe we inhabit,” but, by its revolutionary power, *we*, in our ascent upwards, shall be lost in the regions of the skies.